

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 EB-08 COME-00

AID-05 DOTE-00 INT-05 ACDA-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /116 W

-----131851Z 055563 /46

R 131100Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7299

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN

CINCEUR

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NOUAKCHOTT 820

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MR

SUBJECT: CHOUM TUNNEL BYPASS COMPLETED

REF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 370, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 043

1. SNIM (MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL HOLDING COMPANY) IRON ORE MINING OPERATING ARM HAS JUST PUT INTO OPERATION 13.5 KILOMETER BYPASS AROUND CHOUM RAILROAD TUNNEL. WITH PASSAGE OF FIRST IRONORE TRAIN OVER BYPASS MARCH 30, GIRM AUTHORITIES HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED VULNERABILITY OF MAURITANIA'S "ECONOMIC LIFELINE" --650 KILOMETER RAILLINE LINKING ZOUERATE MINES AND NOUADHIBOU LOADING DOCK--TO POLISARIO GUERRILLA ATTACK. MOREOVER, SIZEABLE MILITARY FORCE TASKED WITH DEFENSE OF 1.9

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KILOMETER CHOUM TUNNEL FOR PAST 14 MONTHS CAN PRESUMABLY NOW BE DISPERSED AND UTILIZED ELSEWHERE IN FIGHT AGAINST POLISARIO. BY-PASS GOES THROUGH FORMER SPANISH TERRITORY, FOLLOWING ROUTE KNOWN TO BUT DENIED TO ORIGINAL MIFERMA ENGINEERS. (INDEED, SNIM CONSTRUCTION TEAM WAS THREATENED BY POLISARIO GUERRILLAS ASSERTING VIOLATION OF SAHARAN REPUBLIC TERRITORY.) GIRM/SNIM DECISION THUS HAS SIGNIFICANT

IMPLICATIONS IN BROADER PROLITICAL CONTEXT AS WELL.

2. OPENING OF NEWLY-COMPLETED BYPASS (DECIDED UPON IN JULY 1976 AND UNDER CONSTRUCTION OF PAST SIX MONTHS) WAS ANNOUNCED IN APRIL 9 SNIM WEEKLY BULLETIN. BYPASS COST 1.5 MILLION DOLLARS, BUT REDUCTION OF OPERATING COSTS MADE POSSIBLE BY ELIMINATION OR REDUCTION OF STEEP GRADES AND 3.3 KILOMETER SHORTENING OF MAINLINE MAY ULTIMATELY OFFSET EXPENDITURE AND PRODUCE SMALL INCREASED OPERATING PROFIT.

3. ACCORDING TO SENIOR EXPATRIATE SNIM EXECUTIVE, BYPASS DECISION WASIMPOSED ON RELUCTANT SNIM MANGEMENT BY GIRM POLITICAL AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES FOR PURELY MILITARY/ SECURITY REASONS. DECISION BY SNIM TO RIP UP TUNNEL TRACK AND SELL IT FOR SCRAP AS PART OF EFFORT OT RECOUP BYPASS INVESTMENT WILL EFFECTIVELY ELIMINATE MILITARILY VALUABLE BACKUP ROUTE. SNIM MANAGEMENT, THEREFORE, MAY WELL RECEIVE SECOND DIRECT ORDER FROM SECURITY AUTHORITY TO POSTPONE PROJECTED SCRAP SALE UNTIL AFTER SAHARA DISPUTE IS RESOLVED.

HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

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Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Control Number: n/a
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition History: n/a
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